First of a Series on
BIBLE PLANTS

BIBLE PLANTS—INTRODUCTION

by

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CHICAGO
NATURAL HISTORY
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Bible Plants

Genesis 1:11,12. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

This wonderful story of the creation of the plant kingdom has interested many scholars and countless other people in the plants of the Bible and of the Holy Land for many years. The study of Bible plants has been marked with great confusion and misunderstandings. It must be remembered that much of the Old Testament was originally in the form of poetry. The songs and ballads, or what we today would call folk songs, were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation for hundreds of years. Quite likely some of these early singers and storytellers made errors. Finally, when Bible history was written down, manuscripts were copied and recopied by scribes who, unknowingly, made mistakes.

Another thing that has caused confusion is the fact that by now the Bible has been translated into more than a thousand languages and dialects. Because it is impossible to translate from one language to another and always say exactly the same thing with exactly the same shade of meaning, it becomes even clearer why there are misunderstandings.

The Holy Land itself has gone through many changes in the past three or four thousand years. Palestine was once a country of green grass and great forests watered by streams that

trickled down the mountainsides or danced across the meadows and plains. Cedars and firs and pines and palms stood tall and abundant. Olives and pomegranates grew plentifully.

But centuries of neglect, abuse, and misrule together with the forces of nature stripped the land of its fertility and abundant vegetation. The prophets foretold the disastrous effect on the land of destruction of forests by greedy thoughtless men. The ancient forests of firs and pines and oaks were devastated by wars or claimed as booty by conquering invaders. Wind and water gradually wore away the soil. When their food and shelter were destroyed, plants and animals disappeared. Floods brought death and destruction because no plant-life was left to hold back the waters. The ancient system of terrace-farming by which early people were able to cultivate hillsides was gradually discontinued, so that the slopes were exposed to the merciless beat of the rain.

Of the towering cedars that once grew on the slopes of Lebanon only a few remain, and these ancient trees are fenced in and protected by the government. The fossil remains of palm trunks, found in the shifting sands, and the writings of early historians tell of the great numbers of palm trees that once grew in Palestine. But today the palm trees are few and they must be carefully cultivated.

Conservation of the land was not practiced by the ancients. No reforestation programs were put into operation by kings or by foreign conquerors. Because of this, in some places the earth now is completely barren and naked. There is no soil left, so that even thorns and thistles will not grow. The bare rocky hillsides stand as silent reminders that nature's laws must be obeyed. So, as the centuries passed, the Holy Land—the "land flowing with milk and honey," the "land of palms"—ever so slowly but ever so surely was transformed into a desert place in which living has become very difficult.

Plants of the Bible by Harold N. and Alma L. Moldenke (Chronica Botanica Company, 1952) provided much of the information presented in this series of Museum Stories. All Bible quotations are from the King James Version.

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Second of a Series on

BIBLE PLANTS

FIG

by

MARIE SVOBODA

Raymond Foundation

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Fig

SYCOMORE FIG

Of all the trees in the Bible perhaps the most valuable is the fig, which is mentioned fifty-seven times. It is the first plant to be called by name. Its pear-shaped fruit was one of the chief foods of the people. Figs were eaten green or dried for winter use. A story in the Bible tells us that Abigail sent, as part of a present to King David, two hundred cakes of figs. The fig tree is generally thought to be a native of southwestern Asia or Syria, but in Bible times, as even now, it was widely cultivated in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. The fig tree is found throughout Palestine today, both wild and domesticated. There are huge fig orchards near Jerusalem, and every private garden also has at least one or two fig trees.

The fig varies greatly in its habit of growing. It may take the form of a long scraggly bush, or it may spread like a vine over rocks. Sometimes it is a tree that is twenty or thirty feet tall. A single tree often may be found growing near wells of water. The fig gives abundant shade with its tree-like form, and for this reason the fig is widely planted in Oriental gardens to this day.

Two crops of figs are produced every year. The first, or winter crop, ripens in June, and the second, or summer crop, ripens in August and September. Sometimes when the summer figs first begin to appear, some of the ripe winter figs may

still be found on the branches almost hidden by the leaves. The summer figs are preserved for winter eating. When dried, these figs are pressed into cakes or hung on a string.

The fig is a multiple fruit that ranges in size from round to almost cone-like. It is attached at its narrow end to the branch, just like a pear. What we call the fig is really a fleshy sac or container for the true fruits and seeds, which are attached to the inner surface of the sac. The gritty particles that one feels between one's teeth when eating a fig are the seeds. Fig leaves may be sewed together and used as baskets, dishes, and even umbrellas.

The great importance and high value of the fig tree to the Israelites are shown very clearly in the Bible. Whenever the prophets cried out against the wickedness of the people, they threatened that the vine and fig crops would be destroyed; and whenever the prophets told of the promise of great rewards, they said that the vine and fig crops would be restored. And so it was that the Hebrew saying, "to sit under one's vine and under one's fig tree," came to mean peace and prosperity.

It was the sycomore fig, a large wide-spreading tree thirty or forty feet tall, into which Zacchaeus climbed in order to see Jesus. The sycomore fig is often planted along roadsides. With its short main trunk and its heavy twisting branches pointing in every direction, it can easily be climbed.

The wood of the sycomore fig is quite soft but it is very durable. Egyptian mummy cases made of this wood, more than three thousand years old, were still in good condition when excavated from tombs. The fruit of the sycomore fig grows in clusters on all parts of the tree, not only on the young branches but also on the old branches and even on the trunk itself. This fruit is much like the fruit of the common fig, except that it is smaller and not so good. It is very sweet, however, and for this reason it is used as food in Palestine and Egypt, especially by the poorer people.

The ancient Hebrews valued their fig trees so highly that King David appointed a special overseer for them, just as he did for the olive trees.

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Third of a Series on

BIBLE PLANTS

OLIVE

by

MARIE SVOBODA

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, No. 299

March 17, 1956

Olive

Genesis 8:11. And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off . . .

The olive was one of the most valuable trees to the ancient Hebrews, and it is still very important to the people of the Holy Land. It grows slowly but often reaches a great age. It starts bearing fruit after about twenty-five years and bears throughout its lifetime, which may be several hundred years. Olive trees grow in great numbers, both wild and domesticated. Often the olive is the only tree of any size to be seen.

The domesticated olive is about twenty feet high. It has a short gnarled trunk and many twisting branches. The leaves, which are narrow and grayish-green, look like willow leaves. At blossomtime the olive tree is covered with clusters of small fragrant flowers. After a time the flowers fall off and cover the ground with a carpet of white.

The ripe fruit, which looks like a small plum, is eaten raw. The unripe or green olive is also eaten raw, but more often than not it is prepared as a pickle or as a relish. In Bible times the fruit was gathered by shaking the tree. A few of the fruits, however, were always left on the branches for the poor people and strangers to pick.

The oil is contained in the fruits. The Bible tells us that olive oil was used in many ways. Its use as a food was, of course, the most important. Almost everything in Bible lands was cooked in olive oil. Bread dipped in the oil was eaten just as we eat bread and butter. Olive oil was a part of the sacrificial offerings. Priests and kings were anointed with it. People used it as a kind of tonic, rubbing it into their hair and bodies after bathing. It was even burned in lamps for light. Some customs in the use of olive oil are followed today. Olive oil is still used at coronations as a symbol of sovereignty. And, in some Oriental countries, an honored guest is shown respect by being offered water to wash his feet and perfumed oil to anoint his head.

In Bible times almost every village had its own olive orchard, and often olive trees were found in gardens. These gardens were not like the flower gardens that we know. Bible gardens looked more like dense groves of trees, and they were surrounded by thorn hedges or stone walls. Sometimes fig trees were planted in the corners. Such gardens were attractive because they provided fruit and also gave shade from the searing sun. Wealthy people and kings owned gardens in which could be found not only olives and figs but walnuts, pistachios, and almonds as well. Such gardens had towers with guards to drive off wild animals and thieves.

The Garden of Gethsemane is a grove of trees. Today it contains seven or eight extremely old olive trees with twisted trunks that measure many feet in circumference. Some of these trees are merely shells but some still bear fruit. Tradition says that these trees date back to the time of Christ. Early writers, however, tell us that in A.D. 70 the Roman emperor, Titus Vespasian, ordered all the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane cut down. But it is very difficult to kill an olive tree by cutting it down because the roots and stump produce new sprouts. Often a small grove of three or four olive trees, all growing from the same root, will mark the place where there was originally just one tree.

From the story of Noah and the ark, the dove and the olive have become symbols of peace and friendship.

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Fourth of a Series on

BIBLE PLANTS

PALM

by

MARIE SVOBODA

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, No. 300

March 24, 1956

Palm

The palm mentioned so many times in the Bible is the date palm. In ancient times the palm tree was as characteristic of the Holy Land as it was of Egypt. Because of its palm trees, the land of Canaan was known to the peoples of Bible times as the "land of palms."

In some places palm trees formed dense groves, and in other places they grew singly. Such single trees became well-known landmarks. But wherever palm trees grew, their presence always indicated plenty of water because palm trees cannot grow far from lakes, ponds, and lagoons. The graceful, slender trunks eighty or more feet tall, with their crowns of feathery leaves six to nine feet long, were a welcome sight to travelers who were weary of sand and heat, for, in the desert, palm trees always marked the location of an oasis.

In Bible times the city of Jericho was known as the "city of palm trees." Its palm gardens were famous throughout the Bible lands. Palm trees came to be a favorite form of ornamentation in Oriental architecture. Their stems and leaves were carved as decoration in Solomon's Temple. The ancient Israelites greatly admired the date palm and often named their daughters Tamar, which is the Hebrew name for the tree.

The tremendous branch-like leaves, called "branches" in the Bible, were symbols of triumph and were displayed on joyful occasions. The use of palm leaves in religious celebrations may have started when Judas Maccabaeus restored the Temple, and their use has continued down to modern times by Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles and by Christians on Palm Sunday and Easter. When Moses gave the law to the people, he commanded that palms be carried during the Feast of Tabernacles. And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, a multitude of people carrying palms in their hands came out to greet Him.

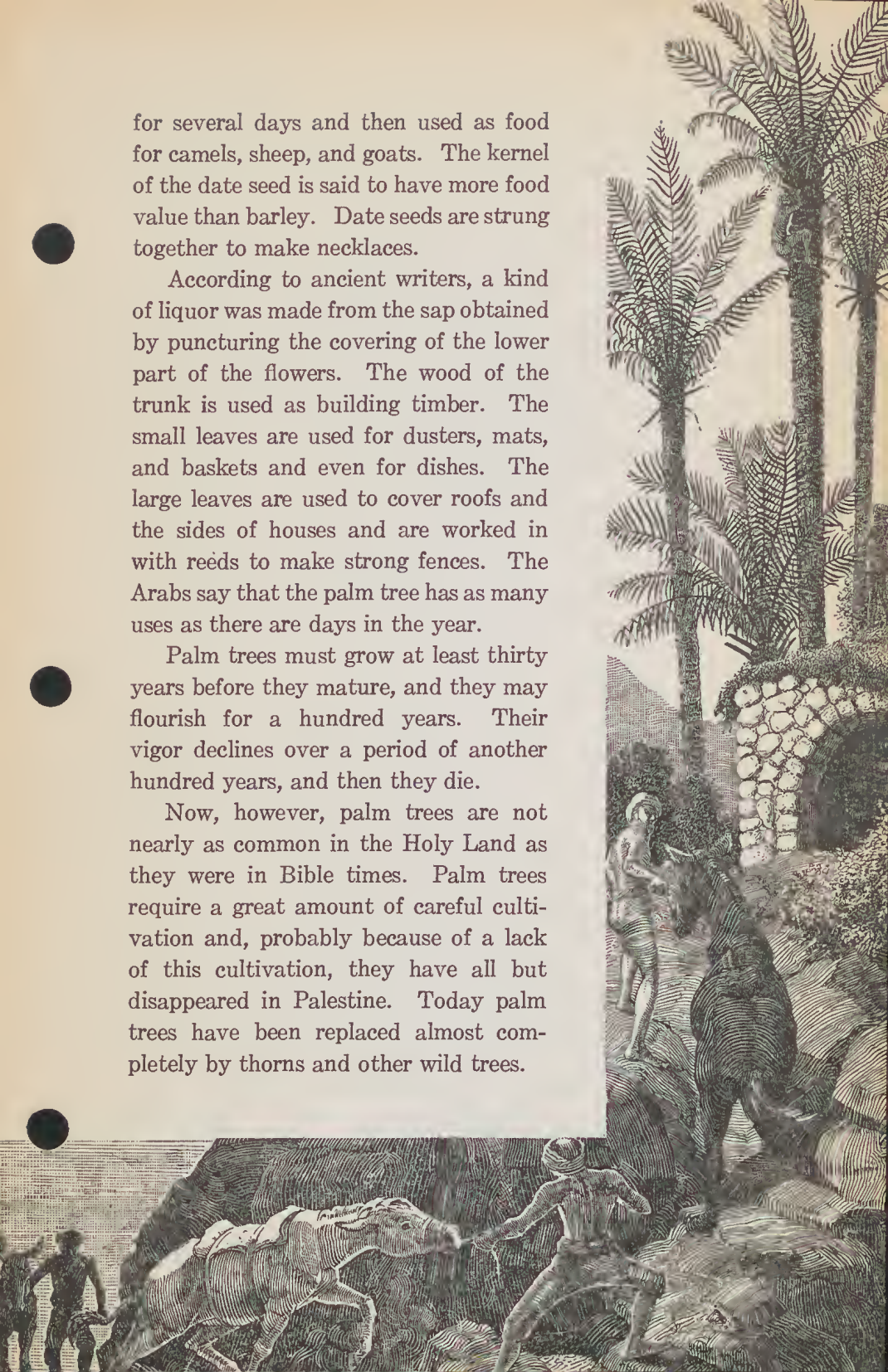
The fruit of the date palm forms huge drooping clusters that may weigh from thirty to fifty pounds. Dates are the chief foods of countless tribes in Arabia and northern Africa even today. The seeds of the date are ground or soaked in water

for several days and then used as food for camels, sheep, and goats. The kernel of the date seed is said to have more food value than barley. Date seeds are strung together to make necklaces.

According to ancient writers, a kind of liquor was made from the sap obtained by puncturing the covering of the lower part of the flowers. The wood of the trunk is used as building timber. The small leaves are used for dusters, mats, and baskets and even for dishes. The large leaves are used to cover roofs and the sides of houses and are worked in with reeds to make strong fences. The Arabs say that the palm tree has as many uses as there are days in the year.

Palm trees must grow at least thirty years before they mature, and they may flourish for a hundred years. Their vigor declines over a period of another hundred years, and then they die.

Now, however, palm trees are not nearly as common in the Holy Land as they were in Bible times. Palm trees require a great amount of careful cultivation and, probably because of a lack of this cultivation, they have all but disappeared in Palestine. Today palm trees have been replaced almost completely by thorns and other wild trees.



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Fifth of a Series on

BIBLE PLANTS

ROSE AND LILY

by

MARIE SVOBODA

Raymond Foundation

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Rose and Lily

Although the Holy Land has no rain or very little throughout part of the year, the country is well known for the great variety and beauty of its flowers. They bloom during the rainy season, of which there are two.

The November rains are called the former rains and the April rains are called the latter rains. Rain also falls between these two periods, making a rainy season of about six months. At this time the land that is parched and brown for so long becomes gay and colorful with crocuses, tulips, hyacinths, anemones, irises, roses, and lilies.

Two of the best-known flowers of the Bible are the lily and the rose. These two flowers have caused great confusion and argument through the years because no one is absolutely sure which lily and which rose are meant.

Probably of the two flowers the lily is better known than the rose. Many people think that the lily mentioned in the Bible is the white Madonna lily, but this is not so. This lily is not native to Palestine, even though it has been painted in pictures of the Madonna and Child many times. It has been introduced into Bible lands only recently.

But what flower did Jesus have in mind when He spoke these words: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet . . . Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:28,29).

After studying the habits and the appearance of many field flowers of the Holy Land, a great many Bible botanists think that the poppy-flowered anemone is the flower that best fits the description of the "lily of the field." This anemone is one of the most showy and wide-spread of the spring flowers of Palestine. It covers the plains and the shores of the Sea of Galilee with a brilliant blaze of color. Today this flower grows in great numbers on the Mount of Olives, just as it doubtless did in Bible times. In the Holy Land the anemone begins to bloom after the former rains of November and continues to bloom until after the latter rains of April.

The Bible tells us that "lily work" was part of the ornamentation that decorated Solomon's Temple. The lily used as a pattern was, in all likelihood, the Turk's-cap lily (which may be found in many flower gardens today), a bright scarlet flower that is sometimes flecked with dots of purple.

The rose is mentioned but twice in the Bible: "I am the rose of Sharon" (Song of Solomon 2:1) and "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1). The Hebrew word *habazzeleth* (translated bulb) indicates a bulbous-rooted plant. Some botanists think that this means the narcissus. Others think that it may be an anemone.

The most likely flower seems to be the mountain tulip, which is deep crimson with a black center. This tulip blooms on the plains of Sharon along the Mediterranean coast. It has long, narrow, wavy-edged leaves and bears flowers that measure from two to four inches across. It has a bulbous root. True roses do not have bulbous roots. They produce showy fruits called hips, which may have looked like bulbs to the early translators of the Bible.

Tulips have been cultivated in Turkey for hundreds of years. The name itself comes from a Persian word that means turban. It has been remarked that the turbaned heads of a row or a circle of seated Turks strongly resemble a tulip bed in flower. The name tulip seems especially fitting for the bright scarlet flowers that cover the plains of Palestine.

LILY OF THE FIELD
(*Anemone coronaria*)

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Sixth of a Series on

BIBLE PLANTS

CEDAR

by

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Raymond Foundation

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Cedar

The cedars of Lebanon were the tallest, most noble trees that the ancient Israelites knew. In the time of King Solomon these gigantic trees grew abundantly on the slopes of the mountains of Lebanon in northern Palestine. Firs and pines also grew in great numbers on the mountain slopes. But it was the mighty cedar that was best known and loved of all trees, not only for its beauty and great age but also for its fragrance and for the lasting qualities of its wood.

All the kings and rulers in that part of the world in Bible times, even King Solomon himself, plundered the tremendous cedar forests for timber. The magnificent Temple of Solomon was made of cedar, as was Solomon's splendid palace.

King Solomon sent 30,000 Israelites, 150,000 bondmen, and 3,850 overseers to fell the cedars needed. In addition, King Hiram of Tyre sent thousands of his own men to help. From that time to modern times the forests of Lebanon have continued to be pillaged. For four hundred years the Turks demanded and received cedar trees that they burned in their iron furnaces. And as recently as World War I cedar trees were cut down

and burned for locomotive fires. The Romans were the only people who made an attempt to save the cedars by setting up boundary stones beyond which no cutting was allowed.

But man was not entirely responsible for the terrible destruction of the cedar forests. Goats by the thousands were allowed to scramble over the wooded hillsides. Many of the young cedars were trampled. But every bit as damaging was the fact that the sharp hooves of these animals dislodged the stones that held back the rich soil. With the coming of the rains, the soil was washed from the roots and from the sides of the hills and flowed into the valleys.

Today the cedars of Lebanon have disappeared except for the grove that lies at the foot of Jebel Makmal and a few trees scattered here and there. The grove contains about 400 trees, survivors of the once vast and mighty forests of Lebanon. The ages of these trees range from 200 to 1,000 years, although tradition says that the oldest ones are about 7,000 years old. This, however, is not at all likely.

The cedar of Lebanon is an evergreen. It produces a certain number of new leaves each year. The leaves mature in two or three years and generally last four or five years. The mature leaves are a deep bluish-green. Cones are borne when the tree is about twenty-five years old, and they remain on the tree for several years. The young cones are pinkish, but this color soon darkens into a deep rich brown.

The cedar grows rapidly, sometimes reaching a height of 120 feet and a diameter of 8 feet. A young tree is shaped like a pyramid, but as the tree gets older its top flattens out and its wide-spreading branches become thickened and gnarled, spreading their leaves in layers.

It is no wonder, then, that the ancient Hebrews regarded the towering cedar of Lebanon as the crowning glory of the plant kingdom. To them the cedar tree was the symbol of strength, majesty, and beauty. The prophet Isaiah gave as an example of God's goodness the promise that He would give His people shelter from the heat of the burning sun by planting "in the wilderness the cedar" (Isaiah 41:19).

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Seventh of a Series on

BIBLE PLANTS

VINE

by

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Raymond Foundation

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April 14, 1956

Vine

The Promised Land was described as a "land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey" (Deuteronomy 8:8).

Jewish and Christian legends give Noah the credit for being the first to cultivate the vine. He planted a vineyard after the flood, and from the grapes he made wine. The vine, its fruit, and the wine made from the fruit are often referred to in the Bible. Prophets and patriarchs and apostles used the vine as a symbol in their teachings and preachings.

The climate and soil of Palestine were remarkably suited to the growing of the vine. In ancient times every hill was covered with terraced vineyards, evidence of which is given today by the wine presses and the vats that were cut into the rocks. Palestine has always been famous for the quality and the quantity of her grape vines. The ancient Hebrews were well acquainted with their care and cultivation. Vineyards in Bible times were encircled by hedges or stone walls to keep out wild animals. Frequently one or more towers of stone were built in the vineyards. The vine-dressers lived in these towers. Their job was to prune the vines and take care of them and to frighten away thieves.

Harvest usually was in September. It was a time of great rejoicing. Towns were deserted because everyone headed for the vineyards, where temporary villages were set up. The grape-gatherers picked the clusters of fruit with great shouting and laughing. The grapes were put into baskets, which were carried on the heads and shoulders of the harvesters; or, if the clusters were too large, they were slung on a yoke that was carried by two men. The best of the crop was saved for eating and for making raisins. The rest was carried to the huge stone wine presses where the juice was pressed from the grapes. Some of these ancient wine presses may be seen in Palestine today. Such wine presses consisted of two vats, each cut from solid rock. One vat was placed higher than the other, and the juice flowed from the upper vat to the lower.

The grapes were put into the shallow upper vat. The weight of the fruit itself was enough to squeeze out a certain amount of the juice. This juice was carefully drawn off and kept separate from the juice that was pressed out later. The Bible calls this the "new" wine, the "sweet" wine, or the "first" wine. After the first juice was obtained, the harvesters began the age-old process of treading the grapes. One or more men, depending upon its size, would climb into the upper vat and tramp on the grapes with bare feet. Encouraging each other with loud shouts, for it was hard work, the treaders continued to trample the grapes until their feet, legs, and garments were stained red with the juice. The juice flowed into the lower vat, from which it was drained off into bottles of skin or into large earthenware jars.

Sometimes a grape vine is so large that it looks like a tree. Its main stem may measure as much as a foot and a half in diameter. Its branches are trained to grow on trellises. Such a vine may produce clusters of fruit that weigh ten or twelve pounds, and it is said that bunches weighing as much as twenty-six pounds have been grown. The grapes are about the size of small plums. The spies sent by Moses into the Promised Land brought back a cluster of grapes so large and heavy that the men had to carry it between them on a pole.

The grape vine is still cultivated in Palestine, although the soil in many places is no longer suitable. It is grown today chiefly for its fruits and for raisins.

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Eighth of a Series on
BIBLE PLANTS

BULRUSH

by

MARIE SVOBODA
Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, No. 304
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Bulrush

Exodus 2:3,5. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

In this Bible story we learn that the mother of Moses made a small boat of bulrushes. The bulrush was used to make many other things besides boats—mats, clothing, sandals, and baskets. It is still used in Palestine for mats and baskets, and boats are still made of it by the Ethiopians. Its underground stem is used for fuel, and the lower part of the young plant is eaten because it contains a sweet juice that tastes like licorice. Perhaps the bulrush is better known to most of us by another name, papyrus. This is the word from which our word "paper" comes. Paper-making was the most famous use of the papyrus, or bulrush. From it the ancient Egyptians made a very strong and durable paper that has lasted for thousands of years. Most of the writings found in Egyptian tombs and in the recently excavated ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum were on paper made of papyrus (bulrush) stems.

The ancient method of making paper from the papyrus plant was very simple. The outer bark was stripped off. The sponge-like interior was split into several strips that were placed side by side with their edges just touching. Then the strips were sprinkled with a sticky substance (called gummy water). Some authorities say that the strips were sprinkled with the muddy waters of the Nile. Finally, heavy pressure was applied until the entire mass became cemented or joined to form a single sheet of paper. After the paper was allowed to dry, it was cut into proper-sized pieces. A better grade of papyrus paper was made by following the same method, except that several layers of strips were crisscrossed before they were placed under pressure.

In Bible times the bulrush, or papyrus, grew in great numbers in the mud along the banks of the Nile, forming a thick jungle-like mass that made a perfect hiding place for the baby Moses. It is reported that the bulrush still grows abundantly along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, in Syria, and in a few spots in Africa.

When the Greeks captured Egypt they copied the Egyptian way of making paper from the bulrush (papyrus). Later the Romans did the same thing. Although parchment and other materials were being used for writing purposes by that time, papyrus was still much preferred. Papyrus was used for making paper in Italy as late as the twelfth century.

The Egyptian papyrus, or bulrush, measures eight or ten feet in height. Its slender three-sided stem, which may be two or three inches thick near the ground, tapers into a broom-like cluster of tiny flowers that looks like a tassel. The entire bulrush plant closely resembles an ordinary household mop standing on its handle.

Even the bulrush tassel was used by the ancients. It was worked into the form of a crown and, as such, was worn by famous men and national heroes. It was even used to adorn the temples and the statues of the gods.

Bulrushes are shown in the exhibit "Marsh Birds of the Upper Nile" in Hall 20 of Chicago Natural History Museum.

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Ninth of a Series on

BIBLE PLANTS

WHEAT

by

MARIE SVOBODA

Raymond Foundation

Museum Stories, No. 305

April 28, 1956

Wheat

Wheat has been cultivated by man since prehistoric times. Because it had been cultivated for so long, the people of ancient Egypt and Greece called wheat a gift from their gods. Its native home is not known. Some botanists think that wheat and some of the other plants growing now in the Mediterranean region whose native homes are not definitely known may have originated in Asia or in Africa.

Palestine, Babylonia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt were famous in ancient times for their wheat crops. Occasionally there were long periods of drought, and famine spread throughout the lands. It was then that the hungry people turned to Egypt for food, as did Joseph's brothers when famine struck Canaan. The yearly flooding of the Nile never failed, and Egypt's wheat never died because of lack of water. Ancient Rome and Constantinople as well as the entire Roman Empire looked upon Egypt as a never-ending source of food.

The ancient Hebrews planted their wheat in the winter, in November or December, about a month after they planted their barley. This explains why, when Egypt was struck by the plague of hail, only the barley crop was destroyed—not the wheat. At planting time the seeds were scattered by hand in all directions. Sometimes the seeds were ploughed under and sometimes cattle were allowed in the fields to trample the seeds into the ground. The wheat was harvested in May or June, about one month after the barley was harvested.

The grain was separated from the stalk by spreading the sheaves on a hard threshing floor under the open sky and beating the wheat with a heavy flail or allowing oxen to tread on it. Sometimes the wheat was laid under a heavy roller to separate the kernels from the stalks. Finally the threshed grain was winnowed to remove the chaff and sifted.

The time of the harvesting of wheat was thought of in Bible lands as a definite period of the year, and it is still a time-period in Oriental countries. Dates are often counted as so many days or weeks before or after the wheat harvest.

The "corn" of the Bible was mainly wheat, although it also included peas, beans, millet, barley, and other grains. Even today wheat fields are known in the Old World as corn fields. This corn is not our American corn, which should properly be called Indian corn or maize.

Bread was one of the chief foods of these ancient people. The grain used in making bread was often called corn, but it was a mixture of wheat and barley. The poor people used barley flour, which was sometimes mixed with beans, millet, and lentils. Bread made of this flour was called barley cakes. Baking was usually done by the women. In Jerusalem the professional bakers were men, and they were located in a special area of the city that was called the bakers' street.

Parched "corn" is an important food in Bible lands today. It is prepared by holding bunches of slightly unripe ears of wheat over a blazing fire until the husks are nearly all burned off. The roasted kernels are then rubbed between the hands to remove any husks that may remain.

Many kinds of wheat were cultivated in ancient times. The wheat with the seven ears on one stalk that Pharaoh saw in his dream is a kind that is still grown in many places in Egypt. It is known today as mummy wheat. Wheat was one of the blessings of the Promised Land, and then, as now, it formed the "staff of life" for countless numbers of people.

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